

FIRST LADIES

DRAWER 2

MRS. LINCOLN - FIRST LADY.

7/2009 DSS 04/126

Mary Todd Lincoln

First Ladies

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Ladies of the White House.

The newspapers speak of the new presiding lady at the White House. This recalls the interesting fact, that in many instances, the wives of our Presidents have been peculiarly fitted, by their accomplishments and graces, to aid their husbands in performing the social duties incumbent on the holder of the highest office in the republic.

The "republican court," as the society clustering at the White House used to be called, has often been presided over by ladies as full of dignity and tact as are those women who are selected from royal families to be the chief ornaments of royal courts.

Martha Washington, the first President's wife, was a rich and cultivated Virginia lady, who was renowned for her quite and elegant dignity, as well as for a fine matronly presence. She presided over her husband's household in Philadelphia with great social success; and her assemblies were always noted for their ceremonious sedateness and polish.

The second President's wife, Abigail Adams, was a noble type of a substantial, wise, motherly, keen-brained New England woman; not especially accomplished, indeed, in the purely social graces, but distinguished for her sterling sense and her deep interest in public affairs.

Jefferson, like Monroe, Jackson, Van Buren, Taylor, Johnson and Arthur, was a widower when he occupied the Presidential chair; and all these Presidents relied on more or less distant female relatives to do the honors of the executive mansion.

President Madison's wife was a brilliant woman of society, and had a political influence which vied with that of her husband himself. She dressed in the height of fashion, was sparkling in conversation, and during her reign the White House was the frequent scene of brilliant assemblies

and social gayety. Long after her retirement from the Presidential mansion, Mrs. Madison was a conspicuous leader in high Washington circles.

The wife of President John Quincy Adams was marked by different qualities, but by qualities which well fitted her to be her husband's social helpmeet. Louise Catherine Adams was distinguished for delicacy and beauty of character, and she presided over the President's household with rare courtesy and dignity.

President Tyler married his second wife while in office, and once more the White House, under Mrs. Tyler's leadership, became the center of a vivacious social circle. Mrs. Polk, who succeeded her, was famous for her personal attractiveness and bright, companionable nature, and was more noted as a social leader than her husband was in state craft.

Social history tells us little of Mrs. Fillmore; but has much to say of the elegance and dignity with which Miss Lane, the niece of the bachelor President Buchanan, presided over his household, and naturally assumed and kept social leadership at Washington.

Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Grant were less conspicuous, socially, during their stay at the White House, although the world heard much of both during the stormy periods of the war and reconstruction. Mrs. Hayes exerted a most wholesome moral influence upon those who came within the circle of her influence; but she was not a leader in society.

The last President's wife who lived in the White House was Mrs. Garfield, whose vigorous mind, positive opinions, and active, social temperament bade fair to make the White House a bright intellectual as well as social center. Her reign was, however, as brief as it was notable; for her husband was shot when he had been at the White House but three months.—*Youth's Companion.*

Methodist Herald
July 3 1884

"Our President" Was "My Husband" to Them

Kansas City Star

8-14-1923

A T first she was unable to realize that she had lost the husband who had made up all the interest in her life for so many proud and happy years. But there was no collapse, no hysteria. Just a brave rally to face her sorrows and the duties devolving upon her at this hour.

In this simple statement Brigadier General Sawyer, chief of the staff of physicians in attendance upon the late President, summed up the courageous manner in which Mrs. Harding took the shock of her husband's death.

Late last night the "First Lady" held to her determination not to give way, but whether she could stand up under the grief that bore down upon her until the sad journey back to Washington is made, is another question. Those who know her best say that she will. Knowing that the eyes of the nation are upon her, she will endeavor bravely to face all the trials, keeping back the surging grief which is so plainly evident yet so well hidden.

And so it goes. Throughout the history of the United States every President who has met death in office has left some one behind.

Mrs. Lincoln, wife of the martyred leader, never fully recovered from the shock of her husband's death and died never altogether out of the cloud which swept over her that fatal night in Ford's theater in Washington.

President Abraham Lincoln sat in the corner nearest the audience. Mrs. Lincoln sat next him; Miss Clara Harris sat near Mrs. Lincoln, and behind her young Maj. Henry Reed Rathbone. Miss Harris was the daughter of Ira Harris, senator from New York, who had married Major Rathbone's mother. The President and Mrs. Lincoln had a warm liking for the pair and had invited them to share the box.

MRS. LINCOLN COLLAPSED.

The President was rather sad that night, spoke little and in spite of the merits of the play—"Our American Cousin"—let his eyes wander again and again from the stage to the audience. That morning at a cabinet meeting he had presented some of his plans for the South and the cabinet did not sympathize with his generosity. This was on his mind. As the self-constituted "avenger of the South" crept up behind him he was not thinking of the play, but of some way to persuade the cabinet to countenance substantial money grants to the states lately in rebellion.

Wilkes Booth, the murderer-to-be, had carefully laid his plans. As an actor he had full run of the Ford theater. In the President's box the bolts on the door had been drawn so that a slight push would cause them to give way. But that night the door stood open. Lincoln was absolutely at the mercy of the man who crept behind him. Major Rathbone said he did not know anyone had entered the box until after the shot had been fired and he turned his head to see the President still sitting quietly in his chair, but with his eyes closed and his head bent forward a little.

He sprang at Booth and received a stab in the arm. He struggled again, but his useless arm hampered him and Booth, crying, "The South is avenged," jumped over the box and rushed into the wings.

The President lay on the floor mortally wounded and it was then that Mrs. Lincoln collapsed.

President Lincoln died early the next morning, without having regained consciousness. Mrs. Lincoln was for a long time prostrated. For several weeks she was confined to her bed. Then she bestirred herself so far as to return to Illinois to spend the rest of her days in melancholy.

Not much has been told of Mrs. Lincoln's after life,—there was not much, for that matter, to tell. No wife could ever really have recovered from such a shock, and Mrs. Lincoln rallied even more slowly than was hoped. She never escaped thoughts of that tragic night and her husband lying wounded on the floor. Thus she ended her days, blighted from the moment

that Booth stood a few feet behind her chair and took his aim.

MRS. M'KINLEY.

Another "First Lady" to suffer was Mrs. William McKinley. Day by day for more than a year after the assassination of President McKinley she prayed that she might join her husband. Her last words were for death:

"Why should I linger? Please God if it is Thy will, why defer it? He is gone and life is dark to me now."

Mrs. McKinley died May 26, 1907, six

years after the anarchist, Leon Czolgosz, while attending a reception at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo September 6, 1901, had shot President McKinley. The assassin had his revolver in his right hand, wrapped in a handkerchief. He approached the President, pressed the revolver to his chest and fired. For eight days the President lingered between life and death. Mrs. McKinley, always more or less of an invalid, rallied, put aside her own ills, and when, September 13, the President awoke from a stupor, she was on hand to sit beside his death bed and to hear his last endearments. He had asked for her. Then she was led away, never again in his living hours to see him.

While the nation mourned her martyred husband, she held to her determination to bear it with outward calm. But soon she gave way. Her frail body could not withstand the ravages of her grief.

July 2, 1881, President Garfield was murdered. Only three weeks before, with a husband's tender regard, he had established Mrs. Garfield in a quiet hotel at Long Branch to convalesce from a long illness. The morning he

was murdered he was at the station in Washington preparing to take a train for a long vacation trip with Mrs. Garfield, their daughter and their two sons. Mrs. Garfield was in bed resting.

THE COURAGE OF MRS. GARFIELD.

Although only in office a short time, it was destined that President Garfield's administration was not to be a peaceful one. The Republican party was arrayed in factions, one sustaining the President, the other joining the banner of Senator Roscoe Conkling, and being known as the "Stalwarts." Among these was a revengeful, disappointed office seeker, Charles J. Guiteau. When Garfield appeared at the station to take the train, Guiteau shot him.

Carried to a couch in the second story of the station, his first thought, although suffering untold agonies, was for his wife. He ordered a message sent her by Col. A. F. Rockwell. It read:

Mrs. Lucretia R. Garfield: The Presi-

dent wishes me to say to you from him that he has been seriously hurt. How seriously he cannot say. He is himself, and hopes that you will come to him soon. He sends his love to you.

A. F. ROCKWELL.

The next day, Mrs. Garfield, weak from her own illness and hardly in condition to travel, reached Washington. For eighty-one days President Garfield lay at death's door. Through all the trying scenes of the harrowing drama following the assassination, Mrs. Garfield so conducted herself that the nation was proud of her as the wife of its President. Her bravery and heroism were an example to the sorrowing nation. Like Mrs. Harding she was an outstanding figure in the tragedy and held up under circumstances that would have crushed many women. Through the eighty-one days of suffering, through the death scene and to the end, the country saw no act, heard no remark of Mrs. Garfield that was not ennobling and beautiful. Through it all she was the same quiet and controlled woman.

An episode of the sorrowful period was the raising of a fund for the support of President Garfield's family. The enterprise was proposed by Cyrus W. Field of New York, who headed the subscription with \$25,000. The fund was to be hers independent of any contingencies. It was proposed that all who felt disposed should add to the sum. More than \$300,000 was raised in this way and the wife and children of a great man who had never taken the time to get riches, were provided for.

Mrs. Garfield died March 13, 1918, in Los Angeles. She was 86 years old and though her later years were spent in more or less retirement she was always an outstanding figure on account of her courage and composure at the time of her husband's tragic demise.

"A PLOT TO TAKE HIM FROM ME."

Like Mrs. Garfield, Mrs. William Henry Harrison, who had been ill, was preparing to join her husband for a trip, when the news came from the White House that he was dead. Harrison died after several days of indisposition that had not been considered dangerous.

The brave Christian woman was stricken. The force of the shock was almost fatal, but she recovered and for fourteen years remained on her farm at North Bend, near Cincinnati. She died when she was 89 years old and her remains were laid beside her husband's on the banks of the Ohio.

The death of the next President after Harrison to die in office was forecast by his own wife. When Zachary Taylor first mentioned the presidency Mrs. Taylor spoke in bitterness and exclaimed:

"It is a plot to take him from me."

Taylor was stricken by a malady not unlike that of President Harding, July 4, 1849. For five days and five nights he lingered. Kneeling at his bedside Mrs. Taylor saw her prophecy coming true—at times she lay insensible on the floor.

Clasping her hand and looking into her eyes, Taylor said, "I am not afraid to die. I have tried to do my duty." He never spoke again. The woman who had never flinched at parting, when, a general, he had gone to the battle field, who had instilled bravery and Christian resignation into so many sorrowing hearts, gave way to hysterical grief.

Not a day would Mrs. Taylor linger in Washington after the funeral, nor would she ever speak of the Capitol or her home in the White House. Two years later she, too, passed away.

The widows of three Presidents now are living. Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt and Mrs. Thomas J. Preston, wife of Grover Cleveland, and Mrs. Harding.

Both Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Preston, by an act of congress, receive the customary mail franking privilege from the



Mrs. HARDING

Mrs. ROOSEVELT (FROM A MINIATURE BY KEELUM)

Mrs. CLEVELAND, NOW MRS. T.J. PRESTON

Mrs. LINCOLN

Social Days in the White House Depicted by Historical Models

Gowns of First Ladies of the Land From 1789 to 1920 Suggest State Receptions of Many Administrations

Washington, D. C.
Special Correspondence

THERE is a room in Washington where no voice rises above a whisper, though many people pass through it. The room is long and stately. Its walls bear emblems of other days than these and it has the atmosphere of other times. Many silent forms move about, touched by the gold light of summer afternoons or the gathering gloom of winter evenings. Other forms stand along the center of the room. They also are silent but, unlike the passing crowds, they keep their places. Graceful, with quiet dignity, in the purple velvets and rose satins and blue brocades of times long past, they stand motionless.

When the first light of dawn strikes them, here in the stillness, it finds them dressed in readiness, as did the last rays of the setting sun. At high noon, when the stream of passersby grows thin for a space, these silent figures seem still to stand ready to give audience. These are wax figures of the First Ladies of the Land, and they wear the gowns which their counterparts wore in the Executive Mansion.

It was with the aim of picturing American history, that this collection at the National Museum was begun eight years ago by Mrs. Julian-James in collaboration with Mrs. Rose Gouverneur Hoes.

When Martha Washington became the first "First Lady of the Land" the momentous question of official etiquette was still to be thought out. Harmonizing the strict dignity of European courts with sufficient Republican simplicity, was a knotty point. Martha Washington gave Friday evening levees and she

herself decided to receive her guests seated. Accordingly, her replica to which we first come, is seated. The gown she wears, purchased in colonial days in London, is brocaded in large clusters of the wild flowers of North America, the violet, buttercup, daisy morning-glory and arbutus, while around them swarm North American insects, the fly, the grasshopper, spider, wasp and ladybug. In her hands is a workbag which her own fingers embroidered. The chair she occupies and the table beside her came from Mount Vernon.

It was impossible to find a costume actually worn by Martha Jefferson Randolph, one of the two White House ladies in Jefferson's administration. Gone now are the fascinating French gowns in which she queen'd it in her father's home. So of the costume worn by this figure only the shawl belonged to her. On a table by her side rest one of her own handkerchiefs and her prayer book.

Lovely Dolly Madison

Born of an English father, Irish mother, and Scotch grandmother, with a Quaker upbringing, Dolly Madison seems to have had the especial grace of each type. Presiding during part of Jefferson's and all of Madison's régime, she was a most widely beloved of White House First Ladies. She adored pretty clothes and early abandoned her Quaker garb. Hurrying along to market one day in a bonny frock with a scarf of lace flying and a swish of silk, a bit of ice on the pavement literally threw her into "the great little Madison's" arms. He valiantly held

on to his prize, daring Aaron Burr or any of her ardent suitors to take her from him.

To Elizabeth Kortwright Monroe, who with her daughter, Mrs. Samuel Lawrence Gouverneur, stands near the lovely Dolly, belongs the glory of having caused the release of Madame Lafayette from her dungeon prison during the French Revolution. And it was as a happy sequel to this incident that Elizabeth Monroe entertained Lafayette at the White House on his visit to America in 1824.

Daintily clad in a high-waisted gown of white tulle stands Mrs. John Quincy Adams, daughter of a French mother and southern father—a fashionable leader who fitted perfectly into the sphere she was called upon to fill. Webster, Clay and Calhoun were among the guests at her famous levees. Her most notable function was the great ball she gave in honor of Gen. Andrew Jackson, the acclaimed hero of New Orleans, to which came distinguished people from all over the country.

Mrs. Sarah Childress Polk's costume is a Worth creation of pale blue satin, elaborately brocaded with the Christmas flower, the poinsettia. "Miss Betty" presided for her father, Gen. Zachary Taylor, and won all hearts from the day when she appeared at her father's inaugural ball in a girlish gown of white silk with a rose in her dark hair. Mrs. Lincoln wears a crinolined purple velvet piped with white silk, and carries a little fan to match. On her head is the wreath which was her favorite head-dress.

Brocade and Point Lace

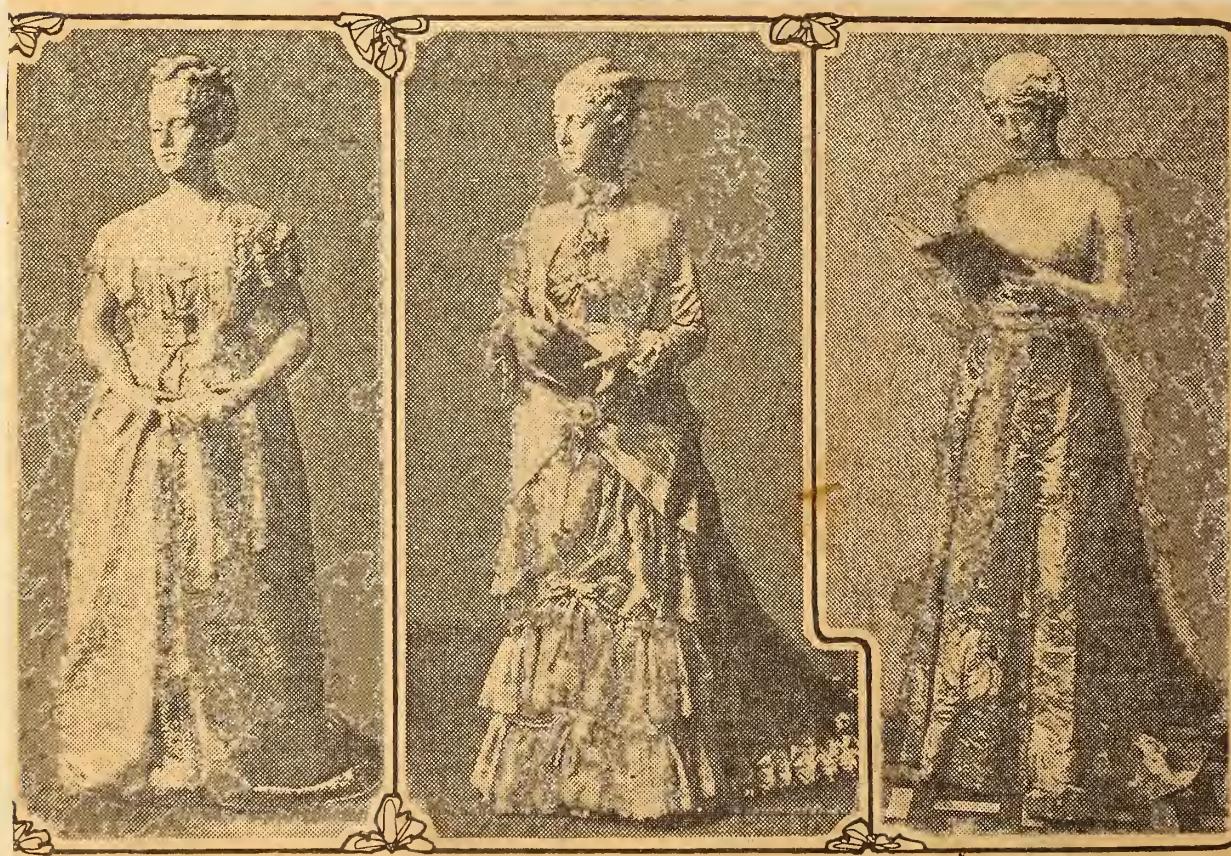
One of the most striking costumes in the exhibit is Mrs. Julia Dent Grant's white-silver brocade with point lace cape. Another beautiful gown is the light blue satin brocaded with silver swallows which was worn by Mrs. Roosevelt at her husband's inauguration. Mrs. Taft's dress was embroidered in the Philippine Islands for her husband's inaugural ceremonies. It is a short-waisted Empire garment of white chiffon.

The last figure to be added to the collection was that of Mrs. Harding, dressed in white satin profusely decorated with rhinestones. So far no gown of Mrs. Coolidge's appears in the collection, but this lack will be remedied in due time. With her usual graciousness she has shown much interest in the group.

And so the inspection might go on. As we tarry in this room toward evening, gazing first at one, then another of the slight figures, we may dream of the events of social history taken part in by the wives and daughters of the American Presidents. These were not personalities that, on the outspread page of history, will shine forever. These were simply stanch women, who, from one end of American history to the other, have quietly served and loved and helped the acclaimed Presidents, and perhaps have shaped more than shall ever be known the destinies of this Nation.



Wax Figures of the Wives of American Presidents, Dressed in Gowns of Their Own Times. From Left to Right—Mrs. John Adams, Mrs. Polk, Mrs. Lincoln.



Courtesy of the United States National Museum
From Left to Right—Mrs. John Adams, Mrs. Polk, Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Hayes, Mrs. Roosevelt.

C. E. Munster. 4-21-1927

White House Hostesses:

MARY T. LINCOLN: A SPIRITED TALKER

Southern Aristocrat, Endowed With Heritage for Successful 'Reign', Was Wrecked by War Resentment.

This is the sixth of a series dealing with Presidential wives and White House hostesses. Another, on Julia Dent Grant, will appear next Sunday.

By BESS FURMAN
Associated Press Writer.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19.

IN THE tearing apart of this nation, and cobbling it back together again, human lives were curiously twisted in the White House.

That elder statesman, James Buchanan, saw his life-long honors crumbling under the charge of weakness as Civil War approached, while his niece, Harriet Lane, triumphed as a very paragon of White House hostesses. He'd trained her from childhood for the job.

Mary Todd Lincoln, well-born, well-educated Kentucky belle who raised her backwoods husband's social status and advanced his political career, was driven to insanity by her White House experiences as Lincoln climbed to a pedestal in the national affections.

Miss Lane's Reign.

The North-South breach had begun to be a social chasm even before sad-eyed Jane Pierce left the White House. Over it glided Harriet Lane on the taut rope of faultless etiquette, never once losing balance.

An able woman writer of the time pictures Miss Lane as: "Always courteous, always in place. Silent whenever it was possible to be silent, watchful and careful, she made no enemies, was betrayed into no entangling alliances."

And Harriet Lane had glamour. Her curtsey had been perfected at the court in London, where she had been for a year and a half the hostess of Buchanan, then Ambassador. She had been favored by Queen Victoria of England, and the Empress Eugenie of France.

Fashion was with her a finished art, in which she could command the newest and most exquisite through friends abroad.

For all of which credit was due Buchanan, the only President who was a bachelor when he went into the White House and remained one.

Harriet Lane was youngest of four orphaned nieces and nephews left to Buchanan's guardianship. For the three older he provided well.

Never was he too busy as Senator, Secretary of State, or diplomat to write her weekly letters of detailed advice.

Chose Schools.

He chose her schools carefully —a few years in their home town, Lancaster, Pa.; with her sister, Mary, to a Charlestown, Va., boarding school; finishing at the famous old Georgetown, D. C., convent.

How Buchanan applied the check-rein to spirited Harriet is shown in a letter he wrote her when in the Cabinet under Polk:

"Mr. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker, have several times urged me to permit you to come and pass some time with them. I have been as deaf as an adder to this request, knowing, to use a word of your grandmother, you are too 'outsetting' already."

It was a thunder-and-lightning change on that March 4, 1861, when Harriet Lane stepped out of the White House, and Mary Todd Lincoln stepped in. Democrat to Republican. Old-officialdom to outsider. Peace to war. Praise to censure.

Wrecked.

Death saved rustic Rachel Jackson from such a hurricane. Proud, ambitious Mary Lincoln was wrecked.

Normally, a Kentucky Todd would have been the type labeled "likely to succeed" in the White House. Mrs. Lincoln came from the same

blue grass section, same social strata as Henry Clay.

She had just the right training for the drawing room of her day. Four years at an exclusive Lexington, Ky., school where only French was spoken.

And Mrs. Lincoln had some notable endowments—a flair for spirited and quotable conversation; an in-born political bent, and a passion for pretty clothes.

But she was a Southern woman coming into the White House with the man who headed the Northern cause.

North Resentful.

Nor did Northerners take Mary Lincoln to their bosom. Jane Gray Swisshelm, rampant Abolitionist, first woman to crash the press gallery, refused at first when friends urged her to attend a Lincoln reception as a curiosity, giving reasons:

"He had proved an obstructionist instead of an Abolitionist, while his wife was everywhere spoken of as a Southern woman with Southern sympathies, a conspirator against the Union."

However, Jane went, was completely won to Mary Lincoln as well as Lincoln, and thereafter was her close friend. On the day of Mrs. Lincoln's funeral in 1882, Jane was asking in print a fairer evaluation of her place in history.

As for Elizabeth Keckley, her freed mulatto dressmaker, Mrs. Lincoln apparently turned to her as to her Negro mammy in childhood, and Lizzie figured in the most bizarre chapter ever written by a President's wife, the accumulation and the attempted auction of some \$24,000 worth of clothes.

at Crown Point, Va. In her party was pretty Mary Harlan, daughter of an Iowa Senator, later Cabinet member. Mary Harlan a few years later married Robert Todd.

Dim White House.

For five weeks Mrs. Lincoln, emotionally frenzied by seeing her husband shot down by her side, lay in a darkened White House, wailing as she shrank from death and debt.

Scarcely a friend came to bid her good-bye when at last she left. No crowds welcomed her to Chicago, nor did newspapers note her presence there.

An Illinois historical society

study of her Chicago stay says: "It is impossible to escape the fact that Chicago and its society were ignoring her."

For comfort, she turned to spiritualism; for activity, to schemes for making money which she felt the nation owed her.

Eighteen dresses were on display on Broadway. An unmade point lace dress inventoried at \$4000; a point lace shawl at \$2000; a camel's hair shawl at \$1500, and so on down to a \$250 point lace parasol cover and an \$80 hankie. Total, \$24,000. Only a few articles were sold, costs were \$800.



... Washington life drove her to insanity.

Dress Costly.

Dress was Mrs. Lincoln's defense mechanism against the psychological attack of Washington's elite. Elizabeth Keckley made her "15 or 16 dresses that spring," Mrs. Lincoln explaining: "I must dress in costly materials. The people scrutinize every article that I wear with critical curiosity."

Nothing that she did seemed to please. Her son, Willie, died and she gave way to picturesque grief, refusing to cross the threshold of the room where he lay, banning flowers because he loved them and she couldn't bear to be reminded of her loss. This sort of sentiment had been thought appealing in Mrs. Pierce, but not in Mrs. Lincoln.

Three of Mary Lincoln's half-brothers were killed fighting for the South. Her sister was widowed in that cause, and when Emilie Todd Helm refused to take oath of allegiance, Lincoln had her sent to the White House.

After Robert Todd Lincoln went to the front, his mother visited him

Nov. 1972

Note: Lincoln's endorsement is written on a letter from Governor Andrew G. Curtin forwarding a printed petition, which appeared to him "just and reasonable." The petition of twenty thousand working women in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is to be found in *The Collected Works Of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy P. Basler, Editor, Vol. VII, 1863-1864, page 467.

The Lady Would Be Appointed Chaplain

"This lady would be appointed Chaplain of the First Wisconsin Heavy Artillery, only that she is a woman. The President has not legally anything to do with such a question, but has no objection to her appointment."

To Edwin M. Stanton
November 10, 1864

Note: Lincoln gave this communication to Ella E. Gibson (Mrs. Ella E. G. Hobart), who was an ordained minister. After being elected Chaplain and the election confirmed by the Colonel, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton declined to recognize the mustering on account of her sex, not wishing to establish a precedent.

First Ladies Of The White House

A lithograph published in 1903 by Thomas H. Devereoux & Company, Chicago, U. S. A. is entitled "Ladies Of The White House." Twenty-two first ladies are depicted in the picture. All are wives of the Presidents except Martha Jefferson Randolph (Jefferson's daughter), Harriet Lane (Buchanan's niece), Martha Patterson (Andrew Johnson's daughter) and Mary Arthur McElroy (Arthur's sister). Actually, there are twenty-eight first ladies (including wives and

hostesses) up to the Theodore Roosevelt administration.

The artist who created this composite picture for some reason failed to include Elizabeth Monroe, Anna Harrison, Margaret Taylor and Jane Pierce. Rachel Jackson should not have been included in the group, as she died a few months before her husband's inauguration. Neither is Martha Patterson included in most compilations.

The Franklin Mint is currently minting commemorative silver medals of "The First Ladies Of The United States." They are featuring forty, first ladies (wives of Presidents) with the exception of: Martha Randolph (Jefferson's daughter), Emily Donelson (married Andrew Donelson, Jackson's ward), Sarah Jackson (married Jackson's adopted son), Angelica Van Buren (married Van Buren's son), Harriet Lane (Buchanan's niece), Mary McElroy (Arthur's sister) and Mary McKee (Harrison's daughter).

An attractive 41 page pamphlet by Gertrude Zeth Brooks entitled *First Ladies Of The White House* accompanies the forty medals which are being struck by the Franklin Mint. The biographical sketch of Mrs. Lincoln follows:

A Controversial Figure

"With her radiant prettiness and winsome smile, Mary Todd Lincoln had been accustomed to getting everything she wanted from her well-to-do parents. But during the Civil War, she not only fulfilled the

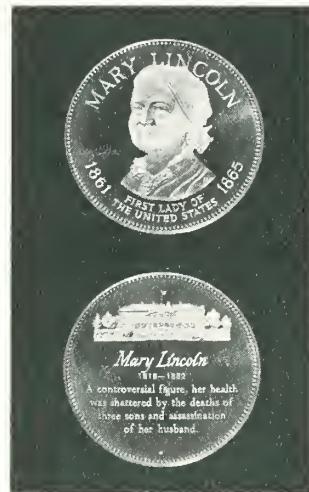


From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The first ladies are listed (back row left to right) as follows: Martha Washington, Martha Jefferson Randolph, Rachel Jackson, Angelica Van Buren, Lelia Christian Tyler, Harriet Lane, Mary Todd Lincoln, Eliza McCardle Johnson, Martha Patterson, Julia Dent Grant, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield, Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Mary Arthur McElroy. (Front Row) Abigail Adams, Louisa Catherine Adams, Sarah Childress Polk, Dorothy P. Madison, Abigail Fillmore, Mrs. Grover Cleveland, Lucy Webb Hayes, Mrs. Benjamin Harrison and Mrs. Wm. McKinley.

social obligations imposed by her position as First Lady, but also provided the comforts of home for her husband, Abraham Lincoln.

"The times were exceedingly painful for her. Edward, the first of three Lincoln sons to die, had passed away in 1850. Her husband was Commander-in-Chief of the Union Army, while her three half-brothers and her brother-in-law died fighting for the Confederacy.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Obverse and reverse of the commemorative silver medal of Mary Lincoln produced by The Franklin Mint, Franklin Center, Pennsylvania 19063. This is one of a series of forty medals of "The First Ladies Of The United States." Only one other medal in the Foundation's vast collection of Lincoln medallie art bears the likeness of Mary Todd Lincoln.

Mary measured up to the pressures even though the strain eventually took its toll on her health.

"Though Mary soothed her husband during his term of office, she couldn't fully appraise the difficult political situations into which he had been thrust. She was at times unable to control her temper which terrorized the servants and estranged friends. She bought expensive clothing and jewelry. As a result of the death of her 11-year-old son, Willie, in 1862, Mary's life was even more tormented. The public chose her as a target upon which to vent its frustration with the Civil War, and she was accused of personal ambitions for power. After a third son, Tad, died of typhoid, Mary's last son, Robert, took legal measures to put her in a place of safety. She was pronounced insane by a jury after her son testified that she had not been normal since the assassination.

"In the custody of her sister, Mary's last years were spent in the house in Springfield, Illinois, where she and Abe had been married. On July 16, 1882, Mary Todd Lincoln died wearing her wedding ring engraved with the words: 'Love is Eternal.'

Rating First Ladies

Wednesday 12/3/92 Friday

HOW HISTORIANS have rated the nation's First Ladies will be the subject of a day-long conference tomorrow at Hunter's Brookdale Sciences Center, 424 E. 25th St. The event will run from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Admission is free. Lunch reservations are \$10.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., Arthur M. Schlesinger, Joseph P. Lash, Abigail McCarthy, Letitia Baldrige, Nancy Dickerson and others will participate. One of the papers to be delivered will reveal that Mrs. Roosevelt was rated first in her performance by history professors across the country. Mrs. Reagan, by contrast, was rated 39th, followed only by Ida McKinley, Florence Harding and Mary Lincoln.

Mary Lincoln Finished Last

Poor Mary Todd Lincoln.

She didn't have enough troubles with mental illness and a lack of respect during her lifetime. Now the nation's historians come along and pick her as the worst First Lady in American history.

More than 100 historians across the country took part in a survey conducted by two Siena College professors. Topping the list, as the best First Lady, was Eleanor Roosevelt. Second on the list was Abigail Adams, wife of second President John Adams.

One of the two professors behind the survey said the results show that non-traditional first ladies are the most highly regarded. Historians were asked to rate the Presidents' wives on 10 characteristics, among them value to the country, leadership, public image and value to the president.

Mrs. Adams, who was the first First Lady to occupy the White House, placed second in eight of the 10 categories. In value to the president she was rated first, and in public image, she came in fourth. Third on the list was Lady Bird Johnson, while Dolley Madison, wife of James Madison, was fourth.

History has not been kind to Mary Todd Lincoln, a Kentucky native in a difficult position as the wife of the Civil War President. She was distrusted by northerners, castigated by the Confederates, and not liked by anyone. She had a habit of throwing away money on fancy clothes, and the death of her husband and later a son put her into a deep depression until finally her oldest son, Robert, had her committed to a private sanitarium in 1875.

She died in 1882 and is buried beside her husband in Springfield, Ill. —kt

1982



Eleanor Roosevelt earns top billing on first ladies list

By JUDY KLEMESRUD

New York Times

NEW YORK — The nation's 42 first ladies came under scrutiny last weekend at a conference that touched on everything from Martha Washington's stodgy tea parties to Eleanor Roosevelt's social activism to Nancy Reagan's "new-china policy."

When it was over the consensus among the historians, authors, journalists and former White House aides who participated in the conference seemed to be that Eleanor Roosevelt was the most distinguished first lady of them all.

A poll of 100 history professors in the United States, released in September, also placed Eleanor Roosevelt in first place.

"No other first lady in history has had her influence, no other has been so much the center of controversy and no other has so affected the lives of the women who followed her," said Abigail Q. McCarthy, the author.

McCarthy was one of the main speakers at the conference, called "The First Lady," which drew 700 people to the Brookdale Health Sciences Center of Hunter College in Manhattan. The conference was believed to be the first scholarly gathering devoted solely to the 42 wives of presidents.

Speakers included Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., the historian, who said he thought the term first lady was "deplorable," noting that the president is not called "the first gentleman"; Beatrice K. Hofstadter, the historian, and Joseph P. Lash, who has written three books about



Eleanor Roosevelt



Betty Ford

Eleanor Roosevelt.

James MacGregor Burns, professor of political science at Williams College, recalled that Eleanor Roosevelt, revered by many today, had been "derided, scoffed at, caricatured and her voice imitated," and that her husband, Franklin, had been "hated, loathed and despised" by many in the 1930s.

A moral in this, he said, might be that "those who are most hated in their time might be the most honored in history."

"And it might be well for presidents and first ladies to keep this in mind," he added.

Barbara Welter, professor of history at Hunter College, said that criticism of first ladies is nothing new. In her paper, "First Ladies

Before Eleanor Roosevelt," she noted that Mary Todd Lincoln had been criticized for her Southern connections and for entertaining during the Civil War, Julia Grant for her lack of beauty, "Lemonade" Lucy Hayes for her devotion to the cause of temperance and Edith Wilson for purportedly running the country while her husband, Woodrow, was ill.

She said Frances Cleveland was pushed into issuing a press release saying not only that her husband, Grover, did not beat her, as the newspapers kept reporting, but that she was "the happiest of women."

As to the proper role of the first lady, McCarthy likened it to that of a "temporary queen," adding that the activities, interests and duties of the late Princess Grace of Monaco were



Rosalynn Carter



Pat Nixon

comparable with those of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis when she was first lady.

The only Roosevelt who spoke — Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr. — said he thought the role of the first lady "depends on the relationship between the husband and wife, as well as the character and inclination of the first lady."

As for how the press defines the role of first lady, Sheila Weidenfeld, who was Betty Ford's press secretary, said she thought reporters were "basically in favor of a non-traditional woman. They want an activist," she said, "and they aren't generous in letting a woman in who does not have the same values."

McCarthy noted that occasionally the nation has had a first lady who

was uncomfortable in the role and that this caused problems "because the nation can't divorce her." She said one solution would be for the first lady to announce publicly that she did not wish to assume the role.

There seemed to be agreement that first ladies who had not taken an especially active role in public life, such as Bess Truman, Mamie Eisenhower and Pat Nixon, had not had any detrimental effects on the country.

"Bess Truman was just little Bess

Truman of Independence, Mo.," said Isabelle Shelton, who covered first ladies from Bess Truman through Betty Ford for the now-defunct Washington Star. "Pat Nixon was never very comfortable in the role of first lady, but she was a very gracious hostess, and she had more ways to say how lovely a woman's hat was than anybody I've ever known."

Letitia Baldrige, social secretary for Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, drew hisses from the audience when she strongly defended Nancy Reagan's style of dressing and her decision to buy new china for the White House.

"She always looked well and dressed well before her husband became president," she said, "and I don't think she should be criticized for it now. And she always set her tables well before, so why should she be criticized for the new china?"

Ranking behind Eleanor Roosevelt in the recent survey of 100 randomly selected college history professors were: Abigail Adams in second place, followed by Lady Bird Johnson, Dolly Madison, Rosalynn Carter and Betty Ford.

The lowest-rated first lady was Mary Todd Lincoln. Nancy Reagan ranked 39th. The rankings for some other recent first ladies were: Jacqueline Kennedy, 8th; Bess Truman, 15th; Mamie Eisenhower, 31st, and Pat Nixon, 37th.

Thursday, September 7, 1989

Library salutes first ladies

By MICHELE FUETSCH

Los Angeles Times

CERRITOS, Calif. — Presidents get their own libraries. John Kennedy's overlooks Boston Harbor. Franklin Roosevelt's overlooks the Hudson River. Ronald Reagan wanted his at Stanford University, but he had to settle for Simi Valley.

And presidential wives? They get a corner in the Cerritos Public Library, about 20 miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles.

It is believed to be the only municipal book depository in the country dedicated to the nation's first ladies and containing a first ladies collection.

The section was created at the behest of local women, who insisted that the library, built in 1973, memorialize the contributions of women to community life.

Forget that much of the archival material — most notably that about Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis — consists of clippings from the National Enquirer.

Forget that under a picture of Mary Harrison someone put the date of her death as four years before she married Benjamin.

In Cerritos one can quickly find out what kind of woman married Calvin Coolidge — a man so aloof that humorist Dorothy Parker, upon learning he was dead, quipped, "How can they tell?"

Grace Coolidge, according to her biographer, was a "lively extrovert" and a teacher of deaf children who as first lady became their spokeswoman and helped secure them a right to education.

In Cerritos, you can find out almost as quickly which first lady had a degree in geology and spoke Mandarin Chinese.

Mandarin was one of five languages spoken by Lou Henry Hoover, who met her mining-engineer husband, Herbert, at Stanford University and after their marriage



LOS ANGELES TIMES PHOTOGRAPH

Heady Johnson, left, and Annette Creasy oversee the collection.

followed him to China where he worked.

Want to know how presidents romanced their wives? Look to the collection for two books of love letters by Woodrow Wilson — to first wife Ellen and second wife Edith. Wilson called both of them "my own darling."

Soap opera writers in search of new material can check out "Cannibals of the Heart."

"Cannibals" chronicles the "Who's-Afraid-of-Virginia-Wolf"-like marriage of John Quincy Adams and his wife, Louisa, whose sense of identity within the illustrious Adams family was so fragile that she titled her diary "The Adventures of a Nobody" and once suggested that "hanging and marriage" were a lot alike.

The First Ladies Committee of the Friends of the Cerritos Library realized, though, when it began hanging first lady portraits on the library walls that it would have to make some accommodations to history.

Presidents often had more than one wife, so the committee decreed that its portrait gallery be open to all presidential wives, not just first ladies.

The first ladies collection — 170 books, 41 gold-framed pictures, six scrapbooks of news clippings, and memorabilia that includes a pale pink leather handbag that belonged to Mamie Eisenhower — is a mother lode of first family trivia.

Among the books: "Dog Days at the White House: The Outrageous Memoirs of the Presidential Kennel Keeper." Among the news clippings: a story about Margaret Wilson, daughter of Woodrow. She moved to India and joined a religious cult.

Julie Eisenhower's biography of mother Pat Nixon is in the book collection, along with a tell-all tome about her called the "Lonely Lady of San Clemente."

For real pathos, though, read "The Insanity File." It is about Mary Todd Lincoln's commitment to an asylum in her later years.

Hillary Clinton becomes liability

By PHILIP TERZIAN

"I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was pursue my profession." — Hillary Clinton.

If Gov. Bill Clinton's campaign strategists are smart, they might



Clinton

consider shipping Mrs. C off to some professional retreat until the first Wednesday in November. Enough such declarations as the sentence printed above, and this fall the Democrats could discover a new, unheralded gender gap: The chasm between people who admire Hillary Clinton, and women who did not choose to become lawyers, but are pleased to bear and nurture children and run their households — or, as is often the case, interrupt their working lives to raise a family.

Between Mrs. Clinton's snide dismissal of homemakers, her parody of a Southern accent while quoting Tammy Wynette, and her interesting business deals and professional conflicts of interest, it is worth asking what voting bloc her advisers seek to cultivate. Indeed, the Democratic front-runner may find himself constituting a historic first of sorts: A presidential nominee whose spouse is a liability, not an asset.

Of course, this was inevitable in the post-feminist age. Hillary Clin-



ton is clearly rather different from the standard political wife. She says what she means to say but sometimes says it without much thought about electoral consequences.

This is someone who watched her husband lose a campaign for re-election as governor of Arkansas before consenting to take his surname.

Mrs. Clinton is well-versed in the arts of litigation, special-interest pleading, grantsmanship, influence-peddling and lobbying Congress. If her husband should vanquish George Bush, I doubt that Hillary Clinton will be content with the White House equivalents of baking cookies and having teas.

Of course, presidential wives have always suffered in some fashion. In the bad old days, when First Ladies were expected to be decorative, those who were awkward (Mary Lincoln) or retiring (Ellen Wilson) were assumed to be malevolent.

Those who were incapacitated (Ida McKinley, Helen Taft) were rumored to be demented. Those who expressed an opinion or two (Abigail Adams, Lucy Hayes) were widely excoriated.

It is commonplace now to assume that Eleanor Roosevelt changed the status of presidential wives for all time. But that is not

entirely true; her case remains unique.

Bound in a marriage of convenience to a man who couldn't walk, she dealt with her own genetic demons by traveling the country for FDR.

Her successors, however, have charted different paths, as disparate as old-fashioned consorts (Bess Truman), trophy wives (Jacqueline Kennedy) or country club matrons (Betty Ford). Rosalynn Carter sought to duplicate Eleanor Roosevelt's influence; but lacking Mrs. Roosevelt's finesse, her baleful, note-taking presence in Cabinet meetings was taken as meddling.

Barbara Bush is a product of her background. Having mortified the press in 1984 with her angry dismissal of Geraldine Ferraro ("itch with a B in front of it") she pulled in the reins and switched horses. She has wisely chosen to concentrate her benign efforts on a blameless cause — literacy — while serving with distinction as America's Foxy Grandma.

For good or ill, America likes Barbara Bush. It is a fair guess that the president's campaign managers will put her on the hustings.

So what about Mrs. Clinton? Well, if she's as smart as she thinks she is, and her media friends believe, she will either learn discretion soon or disappear from sight. Both lessons can be absorbed — Barbara Bush made the transition. But will Hillary Rodham, Esq. prove a willing student?

Philip Terzian is an editorial page editor for the Providence Journal.

Victorian Homes

Winter 1994

Volume 13 Issue 1

FEATURES

15 Artistic Metal Ceilings & Wall Coverings

These tin wonders come in fascinating designs

BY ROBERT SCHWEITZER

18 Audubon Prints

The work of a 19th-century artist and naturalist

BY GAIL KING

26 The Splendor of Victorianana

Decorating a brownstone in a historic Brooklyn neighborhood

BY FRANCES GAY

32 Walter Crane & Victorian Children's Wallpaper

This famous illustrator also designed for the nursery

BY ELEANOR MANCUSI

36 The Stiller House

A turn-of-the-century house in Old Louisville, Kentucky is now home to two designers

BY GAIL KING

40 Anna Warner's Border Garden

On Constitution Island

BY DEBORAH BARCAN

46 Inspired by Ornament

This California company brings the best to Victorian wallpaper

BY JEANNE LAZZARINI

49 The Sirrine House in Mesa, Arizona

A "Territorial Victorian"

BY DEBORAH BARCAN

52 Creating a Turkish Corner

A bit of Victorian atmosphere

BY JEANNE LAZZARINI

54 Florida's Amelia Island

The villas of Fernandina Beach

BY ROBERT SELKOWITZ

60 Fashionable Drapery

Re-creations for your window

BY CATHERINE TITUS FELIX

ON OUR COVER: The Dining Room in a Brooklyn Brownstone. Story on page 26. Photograph by Rob Kern



First Lady Fashions, page 12

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Editorial

- 3 Letters

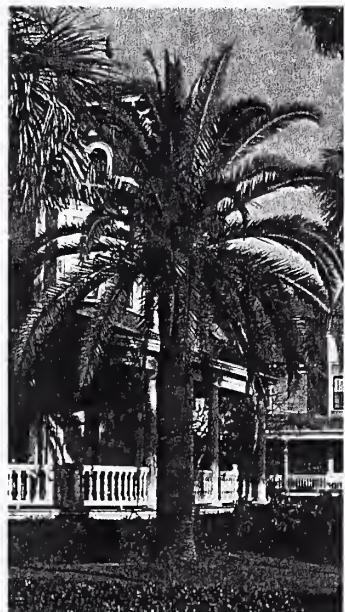
- 4 Spectator

- 6 In & Out of the Victorian Garden
Floral Valentines

BY ELLEN MCCLELLAND LESSER



Walter Crane wallpaper, page 32



PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXANDER CASLER

Fernandina Beach, page 54

- 9 Victorian Lifestyles
Never on Friday

BY SATENIG S. ST. MARIE

- 12 Fashion's Open Notebook
First Lady Fashions

BY ALLISON KYLE LEOPOLD

- 20 Furnishing with Antiques
Belter Furniture

BY NANCY A. RUHLING

- 62 Decorating with a Victorian View

BY NANCY A. RUHLING

- 66 Paint Primer
An 1886 Queen Anne

BY ROBERT SCHWEITZER

- 70 The Working Victorian
Anaglypta & Lineresta

BY JOHN KOSMER

- 73 Sources

- 75 Collecting Victoriana

BY ELLEN M. PLANTE

- 77 Victorian Bookshelf

- 78 Lighting
Art Nouveau Lighting

BY NADJA MARIL

- 81 Victorian Home Shopper

Fashion's Open Notebook

BY ALLISON KYLE LEOPOLD

FIRST LADY FASHIONS

Despite the fact that the new First Lady is a working professional, her hair and dress remains as much a topic of discussion as her predecessors'. Here is a look at how a few First Ladies of the Victorian age set the styles.

The fashion forays of our recent First Ladies are fairly well-known: Rosalyn Carter attending her husband's inaugural ball in an old blue gown, Barbara Bush's Kenneth Jay Lane pearls, Nancy Reagan's famous red suits, lady-like Adolfo knits, and glamorous Galanos evening dresses. Richard Nixon invoked his wife's "good Republican cloth coat," while despite the establishment of Oleg Cassini as "White House designer," we all know of Mrs. Kennedy's legendary predilection for French fashion designers, particularly Givenchy, who created the strapless column of white silk she wore to the inaugural ball of 1960. As the successor to Mamie Eisenhower (with her taste for "Mamie Pink" and that high, above-the-eyebrows fringe of bangs), Mrs. Kennedy set international trends with

chic, Pilgrim-buckled flats, stylish pillbox hats, puffy bouffant hair, and simple sleeveless dresses.

But what about the First Ladies of the 19th century? We know who they were, of course, but what did they like to wear? Were they stylish or dowdy, criticized or copied? Other than poor Mary Todd Lincoln, whose purported fashion excesses have been well documented (she was known to have purchased over three hundred pairs of gloves over a period of just four months!), where did they stand in terms of fashion in the unabashedly fashion-conscious Victorian era?

Leading off the era, in 1844, during the final eight months of President John Tyler's term, was 24-year-old Julia Gardiner, the beautiful gray-eyed, olive-skinned, cosmopolitan belle that

the aging president had just married. Ambitious, adventurous Julia became the 53-year-old Tyler's second wife with a determinedly regal style that leaves our recent First Ladies far behind. With her dark hair parted serenely down the middle, she adored the low-cut evening dresses of the day, which exposed her neck, shoulders, round white arms, and a good deal of her chest as well. Her taste for ostentation had official Washington clucking with disapproval. In her royal purple velvet court dress and a headdress composed of bugles (commonly described as "perilously close" to a crown), she received guests sitting on a low dais, surrounded by twelve maids of honor. Credited with convincing the president to waltz (a dance he decried as "vulgar" only 15 years earlier), at her last official ball she flaunted an unlikely



Julia Gardiner Tyler, painted here by Anelli, was a fashionable beauty of the 1840s who frequently affected court dress for receptions.



Handsome Sarah Polk, who wore her hair in the popular side ringlets of the day, had a style that was described as "rich but chaste."

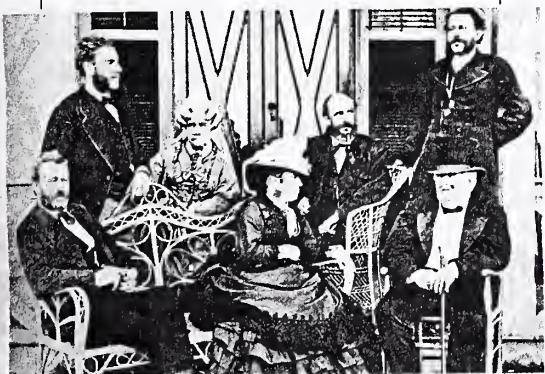


Poised Harriet Lane, President Buchanan's niece, dressed in perfect 1850s attire, in the hoop-supported skirts that were in vogue.

Mary Todd Lincoln in an off-the-shoulder, flower bedecked gown, with short gloves, a reticule, an abundance of jewelry, and flowers in her hair.



Mrs. Grant (in the flowered hat), fashionably turned-out at the Grant's seaside cottage in Long Branch, New Jersey. The President is to the left, her father to the right.



Mrs. Hayes relaxes in the White House conservatory with her children Scott and Fanny, and a friend. The ornate comb she was known to wear in her hair is just visible.



combination of embroidered satin and lace, and a shepherd's bonnet trimmed with ostrich feathers and diamond ornaments.

The Tylers were succeeded by James Polk (1845-49) and his wife Sarah, who was dark-haired, good-looking and fashionable in a way that was described as "rich but chaste"—which meant she was inclined to velvets and somber colored satins. A devoutly religious Calvinist (who outlawed the deadly sin of dancing in the White House), she loved purple velvet set off with a lace collar or lady-like shawl. For the inaugural parade, it was noted by the fashion press that she arrayed herself rather smartly in a long black coat, braided and decorated with fringe and tassels, and a purple velvet hat--quite correct, it was felt, to show off her dark "Spanish *damna*" coloring.

The next years were quiet ones for Presidential fashion as a succession of frail, retiring First Ladies accompanied their husbands into office. During Zachary Taylor's short term (1849-50), his wife remained discreetly out of sight, leading to the rumor (untrue) that she still smoked a corn-cob pipe. A Taylor daughter filled in. Abigail Powers Fillmore's 18-year-old daughter Mary took over for her mother as well from 1850 to 1853. And, there was sad-eyed Jane Pierce (1853-57) with her pale "yellow ivory" skin, who was never written about without the appellation "melancholy" attached. Her only surviving child, eleven-year-old Benjamin, having been killed in a train wreck eight weeks before Pierce took office, she sat out the term dressed in deep mourning.

In 1857, the White House again became a place where fashionable women flocked to show off fancy attire, thanks to James Buchanan (1857-61), a sophisticated bachelor who brought his chic blonde niece, blue-eyed, buxom Harriet Lane ("Sweet Hallie") to the White House. After the invalids of the previous

years, she was a refreshing change, and her robust good health was particularly admired. Well-educated and well-trained in the social arts, Harriet Lane's taste in clothes was judged beyond reproach, as was her tall, small-waisted, corseted figure with its broad, straight shoulders. Her preference for lace berthas, low necklines, and full skirts was widely imitated. Even while in mourning for her brother, she was said to have appeared at a State dinner, lovely as ever, in black tulle ornamented with gold leaves and a headdress of golden grapes.

During her husband's troubled Civil War terms (1861-65), Mary Lincoln, plump and plain, was severely chastised for nearly everything, not in the least for her misguided fashion sense; her taste ran to girlish, overdone dresses heavily adorned with flowers and flounces—more suitable it was felt to a young belle than to a Victorian matron whose husband was leading the nation in a difficult war. Her first inaugural gown was a bright magenta rose moiré, ferociously ruffled and ribboned, worn with pearl earrings, pearl necklaces and bracelets, white japonicas in her hair and one of those tight, stiff, graceless little Mid-Victorian bouquets so popular at the time. Her closet was filled with extravagances such as plum-colored brocade gowns trimmed with black velvet and costly black lace shawls for which she was said to have spent as much as \$500 a piece.

When Andrew Johnson's daughters ran the social side of the White House (1865-69), their simplicity, charm—and perhaps studied lack of chic—managed to set just the right fashion note. "We are simple Western people and we hope that Washington society will not expect too much of us," Mrs. Patterson, the eldest daughter rather demurely apologized, ignoring the fact that she was the polished wife of a Tennessee senator, well acquainted with the Washington scene, and the product of one of the best finishing schools in Washington. Despite the vogue for daring low-cut evening dresses, she championed dresses cut high around the neck, finished with prim little collars



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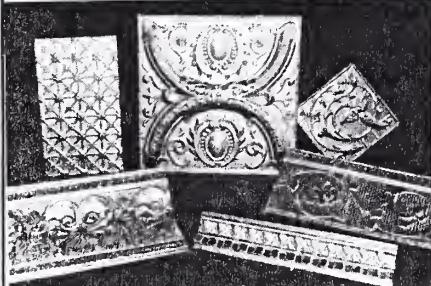
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Mrs. William McKinley weighed down in high-necked brocade.



Frances Folsom Cleveland in the formal dress which suited her so well.

and fastened with a proper brooch. The look was successful—fashionably and politically—and this first set of Johnson girls were a social success.

With the strains of the war gone, Ulysses S. Grant (1869-77) and Julia Dent Grant enjoyed a White House scene that was glittering and showy—very much a product of the 1870s. Victorian extravagance was on the rise, and Mrs. Grant led the way in feathered hats, in cream colored satin ruffled with fine black Brussels lace, in silk velvet with high bodices trimmed with black lace and satin, in shimmering pink with a flounced overskirt, and with sparkling diamonds on her neck. Lucy Harris (1877-81), the first college-trained woman to become First Lady, was warm, motherly, and conservative. She celebrated her silver wedding anniversary in 1877 by renewing her wedding vows in her old wedding gown, a striped white silk with rows of tasseled fringe and ruched sleeves—admittedly, let out a bit of course. The press admired her dignity. At receptions, she conceded to wearing a modified bustle, but while other ladies piled hair high with rats and puffs, her simple hair style remained unique, adorned only with a silver comb or a white camellia.

How did the White House set the fashion during the ultra fashionable 1880s? Bookish Lucretia Garfield (1881) hardly cared for society and her delicate frame appears almost obscured in the heavy furbelows and finishes that

adorned the fashions of that opulent decade. Despite a lovely start in her lavender satin inaugural gown, laden with requisite masses of lace, or a subsequent ball gown of ermine-trimmed cream satin, she's best remembered in the White House kitchen in a long apron, preparing the President's meals after he was tragically shot.

Chester A. Arthur (1881-85), a wealthy widower and *bon vivant*, brought his younger sister and her two daughters to the White House, which became known for its brilliant entertaining—and its splendid High Victorian redecoration. The Arthur women, although proper and proud, didn't make as much of a fashion splash as did Dr. Mary Walker, who attended Arthur's opening White House reception turned out in trousers, a frock coat, silk top hat, and cane.

When Benjamin Harrison held office (1889-93), despite societal pressures, his capable, grandmotherly wife was fiercely determined not to succumb to "décolleté" for the inaugural—hardly suitable, she felt, for a woman her age. Her long-trained pearl brocade gown, embellished with gold embroidery, however, was sufficiently elaborate to please most Victorian critics despite its long sleeves and high neck—to Mrs. Harrison's relief. Still, for the most part the fashion flag was carried by the Harrisons' daughter, Mary Harrison McKee, who wrapped

Continued on page 69

VICTORIAN HOMES

Fashion's Open Notebook

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

her trim little figure in fashionable boas and wore the top-heavy, flower-laden hats of the time with pert grace.

The deaths of two children was said to have unsettled the mind of delicate Ida McKinley (1887-1901), who rarely appeared at the social events of her husband's administration. On the occasions that she did, she appears like a propped-up doll, enveloped in high-necked, heavy brocaded gowns, with a single feather in her hair, just askew.

The real fashion star of the 1880s was statuesque, blue-eyed Frances Folsom Cleveland, who married Grover Cleveland, the former Governor of New York, during his first term (1885-89) and returned jubilantly for a second term (1893-1897). A true Gilded Age beauty, and just 23 years of age, she came to the White House with an elegant European trousseau, exciting favorable comment by her deft management of her 15 foot wedding train. "...it was marvelous how she handled it in a small well-filled room," one society writer gushed.

A popular First Lady, Mrs. Cleveland's decided sense of style (and obvious beauty) was just the boost that fashionable Washington needed. Of course she set fashions in dress, as resplendent in formal black velvet, lace and beads as she was in the lacy, full-sleeved "shirtdress" blouses of the day. It was pointedly noticed though that she cannily dressed for effect—appearing in a violet velvet gown with an orchid corsage and yellow slippers when she received in the Green Room, or choosing a pink costume against the Blue Room's walls. Her second inaugural gown was as grand as the times—a heavy white satin Empire gown, cut low in the front, with a pointed train, stiff satin bows on the shoulders, huge puffed sleeves, plenty of the inevitable point lace, and crystal beads galore. During Cleveland's second four years she favored the Empire style on more than one occasion, while her final reception dress was lavender silk with a bunch of violets tucked in her belt.**VII**

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Betty Taylor Dandridge, 1849-1850, Abigail Powers Fillmore 1850-1853, Jane Appelton Pierce 1853-1857, Harriet Lane Johnson 1857-1861, and Mary Lincoln 1861-1865.

"WHITE HOUSE LADIES"

Being the second installment.

by Janet P. Johl

WHEN Zachary Taylor became President his wife felt that she was unsuited for the social requirements necessary to the position and surrendered the duties of national hostess to her daughter Betty Taylor. "Miss Betty," as she was called had the distinction of being the youngest daughter of any chief executive to honor the Presidential receptions in the capacity of hostess. Fortune was kind and Mrs. Kriger was able to obtain a green silk grenadine material similar to that used on the actual dress worn by Betty Taylor Dandridge while in the White House. The gown is trimmed with bands of Scotch plaid, edged with moss trimming. This necessitated each band being hemstitched and then cut to give the soft fringe finish. The tiny handkerchief has "Betty" in the corner of the hemstitched border.

It was through the efforts of Abigail Powers Fillmore, that Congress passed a bill allowing her a sum of money with which to start the first library in the

White House. Abigail selected a large room on the second floor, which is still used in this capacity. She also made considerable changes in the kitchen department, changing the method of cooking on a hearth to that of a coal range. Tall, with fair complexion and red curly hair, Abigail Fillmore is portrayed in a soft lavender gown, painted with a design that repeats shades of the same color. Her little lace handkerchief hangs on a tiny chain.

Jane Appelton Pierce, the wife of President Franklin Pierce, rarely participated in gaieties and never enjoyed fashionable Washington, due to a great sorrow which befell her and the President just prior to his inauguration. Returning to Concord, New Hampshire from Boston, with their only living son, the First Family was involved in an accident in which the boy was killed. Mrs. Pierce took over the trying duties of the White House shortly after this tragedy. The gown she wore at the Inaugural Ball was



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